

## Document A: Excerpts on Religion from Hammurabi's Code

When Anu the Sublime, King of the Anunaki, and Bel, the lord of Heaven and earth, who decreed the fate of the land, assigned to Marduk, the over-ruling son of Ea, God of righteousness, dominion over earthly man, and made him great among the Igigi, they called Babylon by his illustrious name, made it great on earth, and founded an everlasting kingdom in it, whose foundations are laid so solidly as those of heaven and earth; then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the black-headed people like Shamash, and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind.

Hammurabi, the prince, called of Bel am I, making riches and increase, enriching Nippur and Dur-ilu beyond compare, sublime patron of E-kur; who reestablished Eridu and purified the worship of E-apsu; who conquered the four quarters of the world, made great the name of Babylon, rejoiced the heart of Marduk, his lord who daily pays his devotions in Saggil; the royal scion whom Sin made; who enriched Ur; the humble, the reverent, who brings wealth to Gish-shir-gal; the white king, heard of Shamash, the mighty, who again laid the foundations of Sippara; who clothed the gravestones of Malkat with green; who made E-babbar great, which is like the heavens, the warrior who guarded Larsa and renewed E-babbar, with Shamash as his helper; the lord who granted new life to Uruk, who brought plenteous water to its inhabitants, raised the head of E-anna, and perfected the beauty of Anu and Nana; shield of the land, who reunited the scattered inhabitants of Isin; who richly endowed E-gal-mach; the protecting king of the city, brother of the god Zamama; who firmly founded the farms of Kish, crowned E-me-te-ursag with glory, redoubled the great holy treasures of Nana, managed the temple of Harsag-kalama; the grave of the enemy, whose help brought about the victory; who increased the power of Cuthah; made all glorious in E-shidlam, the black steer, who gored the enemy; beloved of the god Nebo, who rejoiced the inhabitants of Borsippa, the Sublime; who is indefatigable for E-zida; the divine king of the city; the White, Wise; who broadened the fields of Dilbat, who heaped up the harvests for Urash; the Mighty, the lord to whom come scepter and crown, with which he clothes himself; the Elect of Ma-ma; who fixed the temple bounds of Kesh, who made rich the holy feasts of Nin-tu; the provident, solicitous, who provided food and drink for Lagash and Girsu, who provided large sacrificial offerings for the temple of Ningirsu; who captured the

enemy, the Elect of the oracle who fulfilled the prediction of Hallab, who rejoiced the heart of Anunit; the pure prince, whose prayer is accepted by Adad; who satisfied the heart of Adad, the warrior, in Karkar, who restored the vessels for worship in E-ud-gal-gal; the king who granted life to the city of Adab; the guide of E-mach; the princely king of the city, the irresistible warrior, who granted life to the inhabitants of Mashkanshabri, and brought abundance to the temple of Shidlam; the White, Potent, who penetrated the secret cave of the bandits, saved the inhabitants of Malka from misfortune, and fixed their home fast in wealth; who established pure sacrificial gifts for Ea and Dam-gal-nun-na, who made his kingdom everlastingly great; the princely king of the city, who subjected the districts on the Ud-kib-nun-na Canal to the sway of Dagon, his Creator; who spared the inhabitants of Mera and Tutul; the sublime prince, who makes the face of Ninni shine; who presents holy meals to the divinity of Nin-a-zu, who cared for its inhabitants in their need, provided a portion for them in Babylon in peace; the shepherd of the oppressed and of the slaves; whose deeds find favor before Anunit, who provided for Anunit in the temple of Dumash in the suburb of Agade; who recognizes the right, who rules by law; who gave back to the city of Ashur its protecting god; who let the name of Ishtar of Nineveh remain in E-mish-mish; the Sublime, who humbles himself before the great gods; successor of Sumula-il; the mighty son of Sin-muballit; the royal scion of Eternity; the mighty monarch, the sun of Babylon, whose rays shed light over the land of Sumer and Akkad; the king, obeyed by the four quarters of the world; Beloved of Ninni, am I.

When Marduk sent me to rule over men, to give the protection of right to the land, I did right and righteousness in . . . and brought about the well-being of the oppressed.

**Source:** *"Code of Hammurabi," 1780 BCE.*



## **Document B: Excerpts on Economy from Hammurabi's Code**

42. If any one take over a field to till it, and obtain no harvest therefrom, it must be proved that he did no work on the field, and he must deliver grain, just as his neighbor raised, to the owner of the field.

43. If he do not till the field, but let it lie fallow, he shall give grain like his neighbor's to the owner of the field, and the field which he let lie fallow he must plow and sow and return to its owner.

44. If any one take over a waste-lying field to make it arable, but is lazy, and does not make it arable, he shall plow the fallow field in the fourth year, harrow it and till it, and give it back to its owner, and for each ten gan [a measure of area] ten gur of grain shall be paid.

45. If a man rent his field for tillage for a fixed rental, and receive the rent of his field, but bad weather come and destroy the harvest, the injury falls upon the tiller of the soil.

46. If he do not receive a fixed rental for his field, but lets it on half or third shares of the harvest, the grain on the field shall be divided proportionately between the tiller and the owner.

47. If the tiller, because he did not succeed in the first year, has had the soil tilled by others, the owner may raise no objection; the field has been cultivated and he receives the harvest according to agreement.

48. If any one owe a debt for a loan, and a storm prostrates the grain, or the harvest fail, or the grain does not grow for lack of water; in that year he need not give his creditor any grain, he washes his debt-tablet in water and pays no rent for this year.

49. If any one take money from a merchant, and give the merchant a field tillable for corn or sesame and order him to plant corn or sesame in the field, and to harvest the crop; if the cultivator plant corn or sesame in the field, at the harvest the corn or sesame that is in the field shall belong to the owner of the field and he shall pay corn as rent, for the money he received from the merchant, and the livelihood of the cultivator shall he give to the merchant.

50. If he give a cultivated corn-field or a cultivated sesame-field, the corn or sesame in the field shall belong to the owner of the field, and he shall return the

money to the merchant as rent.

51. If he have no money to repay, then he shall pay in corn or sesame in place of the money as rent for what he received from the merchant, according to the royal tariff.

52. If the cultivator do not plant corn or sesame in the field, the debtor's contract is not weakened.

53. If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined.

54. If he be not able to replace the corn, then he and his possessions shall be divided among the farmers whose corn he has flooded.

55. If any one open his ditches to water his crop, but is careless, and the water flood the field of his neighbor, then he shall pay his neighbor corn for his loss.

56. If a man let in the water, and the water overflow the plantation of his neighbor, he shall pay ten gur of corn for every ten gan of land.

57. If a shepherd, without the permission of the owner of the field, and without the knowledge of the owner of the sheep, lets the sheep into a field to graze, then the owner of the field shall harvest his crop, and the shepherd, who had pastured his flock there without permission of the owner of the field, shall pay to the owner twenty gur of corn for every ten gan.

58. If after the flocks have left the pasture and been shut up in the common fold at the city gate, any shepherd let them into a field and they graze there, this shepherd shall take possession of the field which he has allowed to be grazed on, and at the harvest he must pay sixty gur of corn for every ten gan.

59. If any man, without the knowledge of the owner of a garden, fell a tree in a garden he shall pay half a mina in money.

**Source:** *"Code of Hammurabi," 1780 BCE.*



## **Document C: Excerpts on Society from Hammurabi's Code**

117. If any one fail to meet a claim for debt, and sell himself, his wife, his son, and daughter for money or give them away to forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor, and in the fourth year they shall be set free.

[. . .]

138. If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the dowry which she brought from her father's house, and let her go.

[. . .]

196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

197. If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.

198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.

199. If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.

200. If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.

201. If he knock out the teeth of a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a gold mina.

202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public.

203. If a free-born man strike the body of another free-born man or equal rank, he shall pay one gold mina.

**Source:** *"Code of Hammurabi," 1780 BCE.*

## Document A: Hammurabi's Code—Religion (Modified)

*The following selection is from the introduction of Hammurabi's Code. As you read, pay attention to the religion of Babylonia. What did people believe in? Who were their gods?*

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When Anu the **Sublime** . . . and Bel, the lord of Heaven and earth, who **decreed** the fate of the land, assigned to Marduk, the over-ruling son of Ea, God of righteousness, power over earthly man, and made him great . . . they called Babylon by his celebrated name, made it great on earth, and founded an everlasting kingdom in it. Then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the **exalted** prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the black-headed people like Shamash, and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind.

**Source:** "Code of Hammurabi," 1780 BCE.

### Vocabulary

sublime: greatest

decreed: ordered

exalted: highly thought of, grand

## Document B: Hammurabi's Code—Economy

*The following selections from Hammurabi's Code discuss the economy in Babylonia. As you read, pay attention to what was important to Babylonians as they tried to make a living.*

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42. If any one take over a field to **till** it, and obtain no harvest from it, it must be proved that he did no work on the field, and he must deliver grain, just as his neighbor raised, to the owner of the field.

43. If he do not till the field, but let it lie **fallow**, he shall give grain like his neighbor's to the owner of the field, and the field which he let lie fallow he must plow and sow and return to its owner.

53. If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition . . . if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined.

54. If he be not able to replace the corn, then he and his possessions shall be divided among the farmers whose corn he has flooded.

59. If any man, without the knowledge of the owner of a garden, **fell** a tree in a garden he shall pay half a mina in money.

**Source:** "Code of Hammurabi," 1780 BCE.

### Vocabulary

till: farm, work

fallow: land with no seeds planted

fell: cause to fall

## Document C: Hammurabi's Code—Society

*The following selections from Hammurabi's Code discuss rules for Babylonian society. As you read, pay attention to how society was structured. Was everyone treated equally?*

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117. If any one fails to pay a debt, and sells himself, his wife, his son, or daughter for money or give them away for forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them and in the fourth year they shall be set free.

138. If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the **dowry** which she brought from her father's house, and let her go.

196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.

199. If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.

202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public.

203. If a free-born man strike the body of another free-born man or equal rank, he shall pay one gold mina.

**Source:** "Code of Hammurabi," 1780 BCE.

### Vocabulary

dowry: money or property that a wife's family gives to her husband when they marry



## Guiding Questions

### Central Historical Question:

*What can we learn about Babylonia from Hammurabi's Code?*

#### Document A: Religion

1. According to this document, where did Hammurabi get his power as king?
2. Monotheistic or Polytheistic?
  - a. According to this document, was Babylonia a monotheistic society (belief in one god) or a polytheistic society (belief in many gods)?
  - b. How do you know this from Hammurabi's Code?
3. According to this document, what is the goal of Hammurabi's Code?

#### Document B: Economy

1. Working the fields: Summarize laws 42-43 in your own words.
2. The dams: Summarize laws 53-54 in your own words.
3. Type of Economy
  - a. According to this document, do you think most people in Babylonia made money in cities or in the country?
  - b. How do you know this from Hammurabi's Code?

### Document C: Society

1. Laws 196-198 discuss putting out the eye of “another man,” a “free man” and a “slave.”
  - a. According to this document, whose eye was worth the most?
  - b. According to this document, whose eye was worth the least?
  - c. How do you know?
2. Equality
  - a. According to this document, was everyone equal in Babylonia?
  - b. How do you know this from Hammurabi’s Code?
    - i. Evidence 1:
    - ii. Evidence 2:
3. Women
  - a. According to law 138, what happens to a dowry if a man leaves his wife?
  - b. What does this suggest about the position of women in Babylonian society?



## Summary

What are some of the limitations of Hammurabi's Code as evidence of life in Babylonia?

What other sources might help us to better understand life in Babylonia?

**Use evidence from the historical documents you read to answer the central historical question by completing the sentences below:**

*What can we learn about Babylonia from Hammurabi's Code?*

Historians can learn a lot about Babylonia from Hammurabi's Code. According to the Code, Babylonian religion was \_\_\_\_\_

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According to the Code, the Babylonian economy was based on \_\_\_\_\_

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According to the Code, Babylonian society was structured around \_\_\_\_\_

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